

Edinburgh to Kilimanjaro

✘ This Christmas and New Year Jane Thomson has promised that she will be the designated driver at all times. She has been training since February this year for her expedition to Kilimanjaro in January, and so there will be no over-indulgence over the festive period to undo all the hard work she has put in over this year!

Jane is PA to Chairman of the hotel group, The Townhouse Collection, Peter Taylor, and works from a cosy wee office in the Bonham Hotel in Drumsheugh Gardens. As well as this she is a director of the spin off from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival called [Fringe by the Sea](#) and principal in her own interior design business. She has a busy enough life without all the extra effort it has taken to get herself fit enough to climb the 4th highest mountain in the world. So why is she going? Well she is part of the Hospitality Industry Trust Scotland Appeal who are going all the way to Africa to hold a Burns Supper on the mountain, and in doing so she is also hoping to raise some money for the charity. "I have raised about £3,000 to date but I am aiming for around £5,000 so I need some more donations instead of Christmas presents!" HIT Scotland is a Scottish based charity which raises funds to support & encourage excellence in the hospitality Industry. Its mission is "to assist people to achieve their potential within Scottish hospitality".

✘ Although she describes the expedition as a "walk" to the top, it is clear that it will be arduous enough. The team of 21 all work in hospitality related businesses and they are flying out to Kilimanjaro on the 4th of January to spend four days in a wildlife reserve in the Ngorongoro Highlands where they will acclimatise by living in a tented village. The weather there is expected to be a warm 35 degrees and the team will spend their days walking and going on safari to see the Big Five. The need to acclimatise is a serious one as the peak

is 19,341 feet – about 5,000 feet over the level where you should require oxygen.

Jane said:-“The climb has been organised with [Wilderness Journeys](#) who have official guides based in Africa, and their advice is to bring all your gear in one duffel bag which will be transported to the next campsite, only taking what you need with you each day in your own backpack. I will need two lots of gear – one for warm weather and one for cold. But the trick is to have lots of thin layers, particularly for the end of the route. On the last night we will get up at midnight and proceed to the summit in an expected minus 15 degrees. The Scottish weather over recent days has been quite useful!”

Director of Wilderness Journeys, Stevie Christie, said:- “Kilimanjaro is the highest peak in Africa and, at just under 6000m high, is 6 times higher than your average ‘Munro’. Reaching the ‘roof of Africa’ is a magical and memorable moment – but it is one that you must work hard to earn!

As well as the dangers posed by the high altitude, the group will face extremes of temperatures as they trek from the sweltering savannah to the freezing summit. Having led them on several training hikes in Scotland, however, I believe that they have both the fitness and the determination to succeed, especially when they are driven by raising funds for HIT Scotland. I wish them every success for their expedition.”



Photo courtesy of Wilderness Journeys

The real hard work will start from about 2000 feet when there will be a six and a half day walk to the summit. There will be some walking past the campsites to a higher level and then coming back to the camp in an effort to combat the threat of altitude sickness.

Jane thinks that:-“It will be an incredible achievement. I am really looking forward to it and think that all my training means I am now really ready.” She has been sponsored by a few different organisations including [Studio EH1](#) who have offered her free training facilities at their Power Plates Academy which she has faithfully attended three times a week. As well as other trips to the gym to work out on the Stairmaster with her rucksack on, (“People think I am mad!”), she has also undertaken a few different walks in the Scottish Highlands to get to the peak of fitness, including Lochnagar in August. All of this is made all the more admirable when you realise that Jane had treatment for breast cancer in the last couple of years. Other sponsors include Scottish butchers, Simon Howie, whisky company Johnnie Walker & the brewing company, Guinness. Highland Spring are also providing jackets and bags for the team.

These kind of challenges are now pretty common, and many Edinburgh people have already undertaken the walk to the summit of Kilimanjaro, but it still takes an amount of determination – and also an amount of self-funding. Jane explained that her vaccinations alone cost £300, the same price as her sleeping bag which has to cope with the extreme conditions she may encounter!

We wish her bon voyage and a safe return to the day jobs.

If you wish to contribute to the charity then you can donate on the HIT Scotland page which you can access [here](#).